

Statement on
Dr. Ambedkar

On the Occasion of his Birth Centenary



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Integrate the anti-Brahminic, democratic teaching of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar with the tasks of New Democratic revolution.

Right from the beginning, the communist movement in India has found its most militant and determined base among the Dalits. This is natural, since the vast majority of the Dalits are landless peasants/agricultural labourers, doubly oppressed by exploitation and the inhuman Brahminic uppercaste domination. Whenever the communists put stress on basing the party among the most oppressed sections of society and leading revolutionary struggle against all forms of oppression and exploitation, the Dalits have responded in an overwhelming manner. This is particularly seen in the whole experience of the Communist Party of India(M-L) founded by Com. Charu Mazumdar. The armed struggle led by the communists has certainly led to a greater social awareness among the Dalits and further strengthened their militant struggle against Brahminic upper caste domination. Yet, despite this, the communist movement in India,

including the C P I (M-L), had never paid attention to develop theory or practice specifically addressing the oppressive caste system. Till recent, a mechanical approach of predicting the more or less automatic elimination of caste through the victory of class struggle has remained dominant.

Of late, some sections of the C P I (M L), including the Central Reorganisation Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) - CRC, CPI(M-L) - have initiated efforts to break away from this negative tradition. This is a timely development and will be of great importance to the democratic revolution. Still, these efforts will remain incomplete until the rich traditions of anti-Brahminic struggles in the Indian sub-continent are assimilated by the Communists. Among these traditions; the life and struggle of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is of particular importance and relevance.

He was the only one among the leaders of the anti-Brahminic struggles in the sub-continent who consistently tried to deal with the caste

question from the standpoint of the Dalits,
the worst
sufferers of the caste system.

Due to its mechanical approach on the caste question and its anti-Marxist approach of evaluating individuals and events in separation from the historical period and its limitations, the communist movement in India including the CPI(ML), has characterised Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as a "stooge of Imperialism". Instead of assimilating and building on the contributions of Dr. Ambedkar, it has always posed the task of fighting against the influence of Dr. Ambedkar's thinking as a pre-condition to rally the Dalit masses. All these were grievous mistakes which have caused great losses to the anti-Brahminic struggle and the democratic revolution as a whole. Instead of sharpening and forcefully wielding the weapons forged by the Dalit masses through their own struggles, these actions led to snatch them away from the most militant sections of the Dalits who have rallied behind the communists. As a result,

Dr. Ambedkar's co-ntributions have been mainly appropriated and blunted by reformist, parliamentary and collaborationist sections of the Dalit leaders. Today they are collaborating with the all India ruling class with conspiracies to utilise Dr. Ambedkar and cover up its anti -Dalit character. They are shamelessly joining up, directly or indirectly, in the conspiracies to denigrate Dr. Ambedkar as a 'Hindu social reformer'. At such a juncture it becomes all the more important for the Marxist-Leninists to decisively break with their past mistakes and put forward a correct position on Dr. Ambedkars contribution. The crux of smashing the caste system is primarily one of the Dalits self emanicipation from Brahminic uppercaste oppression. Hence the question of identifying, assimilating and developing the anti - Brahminic, democratic teaching of Dr. Ambedkar becomes a dividing line between those who genuinely stand for the annihilation of caste and reformists of all hues. It is a dividing line between those who stand for a thoroughgoing New Democratic revolution and those who merely pay lip service to it.

What are the principal elements of the anti-Brahminic, democratic teachings of Dr. Ambedkar? In our view they consist of the following:

(1) The caste system must be annihilated in its entirety. All beliefs, ideology and structures supporting the caste system (i.e. Roti-Beti vyavahar) must be rejected. The annihilation of caste will be complete only when its role as closed marriage circle is eliminated.

(2) The annihilation of caste is possible only through rousing the self-respect; self-esteem and self-action of the oppressed castes, principally the Dalits. It can never come through condescending reforms from above.

(3) Economic determinist thinking which considers that caste will be more or less automatically eliminated following the transformation of the economic order, should be rejected. This thinking helps to perpetuate the caste system, keeps the toiling masses in disunity and serves the interests of Brahminism.

(4) Caste is not only a division of labour. It

is also a division of labourers and an heirarchy of graded inequality which seriously hinders the unity of the toiling masses. Brahminism must be uprooted from among the workers if their ranks are to be united.

{5}Brahminism does not mean the power privileges and interests of the Brahmins as a community. It means the spirit of inequality, the negation of liberty, equality and fraternity. It is rampant in all classes and must be targetted as an enemy of the working class.

(6)The eman-cipation of the Details is bound up with the land question. Though being toilers on the land they have been excluded from all rights, including tenancy by the caste system. Hence the resolution of the land question must be done in a manner which overthrows this casteist bar.

(7)The Dalits' participation in political power should be ensured as a guarantee of their eman cipation and the annihilation of the caste system. A civil service in tune with the new order is essential. A system of

reservation is necessary to overcome the privileged position enjoyed by the upper castes and ensure equality of opportunity.

We firmly believe that any programme for a thoroughgoing New Democratic Revolution must necessarily include these principles. They are essential for the successful completion of the democratic revolution and to prepare the grounds for the transition to socialism and communism. They, particularly the struggle against Brahminism, are essential in the Indian context, for the proletariat to really become a class, conscious of its historical mission and to successfully play the role of leader in the New Democratic Revolutions of the oppressed peoples of India.

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Dr. Ambedkar cherished the ideals of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' and consistently applied them in his struggle against the caste system. These ideals are the ideals of bourgeois democracy in its revolutionary phase, of the French revolution. There were many others in India

(such as Nehru, Jay Prakash and so on) who also hailed these ideals in words. But Dr. Ambedkar was unique in his insistence to see them realised in India. This insistence, his own experiences his total identification with the cause of Details (the most oppressed and exploited section) and the workers, and the worldwide impact of the victorious advance of the socialist Soviet Union under the leadership of Stalin led Dr. Ambedkar to recognise that bourgeois democracy "has continuously added to the economic wrongs for the poor, the down trodden and the disinherited class". (1). He said: "We welcome the Russian revolution because it aims to produce equality". (2) Dr Ambedkar was not a worshipper of private property. Arguing in defence of violence for a just cause, he wrote; "...if a murderer can be killed because he has killed a citizen ...why cannot a property owner be killed if his ownership leads to misery for the rest of humanity? There is no reason why one should regard private property as sacrosant." (3) Evidently it is the radical aspects of

bourgeois democracy which appealed to Dr. Ambedkar most. Moreover, though he never settled accounts with the bourgeois democratic world outlook, he often leapt beyond the limits of this outlook in his continuous quest to achieve thorough democratisation and equality in the caste-ridden Indian society. In the present historical stage, where the peoples of India are faced with the tasks of democratic revolution, radical and consistent bourgeois democracy such as that of Dr Ambedkar, is itself a component of the progressive, revolutionary stream of history.

A comparison of Dr Ambedkar's views and those of the so-called democrats among the compradors such as Gandhi and Nehru, will easily confirm this. Dr. Ambedkar was mainly involved in the struggle to emancipate the dalits. But he did not consider the annihilation of caste from a sectarian, casteist stand point. He understood it as the thorough democratisation of society. So his critique of Brahminism also dealt with its pernicious impact on the oppression of

women and on the workers movement. Continuing the tradition of the anti-Brahminic fighters like Jyotiba Phule, he pointed out the role of women's oppression in relation to the preservation of the caste system. Developing the critique of Brahminism in the modern context he pointed out how its spirit of graded inequality prevents the exploited from uniting and struggling for their emancipation. Dr. Ambedkar also exposed the Brahminic trick of utilising modern institutions, such as imposing the formal framework of democracy over an anti-democratic caste ridden social organisation. He pointed out the difference between a political majority (which can be changed in its class composition) and the communal majority enjoyed by the upper castes by birth right. Thus he exposed how universal suffrage with joint electorates actually amounts to hereditary government, the exact opposite of democracy. 40 years of Indian democracy stand testimony to this brilliant insight. It can really be seen that Dr. Ambedkar's consistent application of the principles of bourgeois democracy lead to qualitative advances in recognising the tasks involved in the democratisation of Indian

society. In contrast to this, the Gandhis' and Nehrus' utilised the cap of democracy to hide their Savarna rafts and retain the reactionary grip of Brahminism. As for the leadership of the communist party, it failed to break away from Brahminism and tailed the compradores. The fact that the democrat Dr. Ambedkar had contributed more to the cause of New Democracy than the communist leadership who claimed to be leading a democratic revolution.

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In a country like India which is dominated by imperialism, the question of democracy is linked up to a resolute struggle against imperialism. In the colonial period, imperialist domination in India lead to a loosening up of the old feudal order. The severly rigid caste structure was also affected and the dalits and other oppressed castes could gain slight relief. But once political domination and economic penetration was secured, British colonialism basically protected feudal relations of production. It made feudalism the social basis of colonial domination and hindered the democratisation of society.

To a great extent, Dr Ambedkar was aware of this dual face of colonialism. He said:".....that the British ..have done some good we cheerfully acknowledge. But there is certainly no fundamental change in our position ..It is not because they (British government—C.K.C) cannot help us...but because it is against their character, motives and interests to do so. ...We must have a government which.....will not be afraid to am-end the social and econmic code of life which the dictates of justice and expediency so urgently call for. This role the British government will never be able to play. It is only a government which is of the people for the people and by the people that will make this possible...It is only in a Swaraj constitution that we stand any chance of getting the political power into our own hands, without which we cannot bring salvation to our peole."(4)

But how could Swaraj be achieved? Like his predecessors who played a leading role in the anti-Brahminic democratic struggle, Dr. Ambedkar too failed to point out the solution -- a revolutionary struggle linking up of the

anti-imperialist and anti-Brahminic democratic struggles and the violent overthrowing of the colonial feudal order. As a result Dr. Ambedkar could not consistently follow a path of struggle targetting imperialism and feudalism. Departing from his own position of achieving the eman-cipation of Dalits through 'self-action', he accepted office in the colonial government during the 2nd World War* and latter in the Nehru government in the hope of achieving some changes in the oppressive conditions faced by the Dalits. His effort to become a member of the Constituent Assembly (in the teeth of opposition from the Brahminic Congress overlords) and his role in the Assembly were similar instances. The outcome** was yet another bitter affirmation that the eman-cipation of the Dalits could never come through the colonial government or an imperialist inspired constitution. The presence of people like Dr. Ambedkar, firmly committed to the cause of anti-Brahminic, democratic struggle, could not make any change in the reactionary character of those bodies. Swaraj and eman-cipation of the Dalits never come as gifts from the classes commanding these institutions because these aims

go 'against their "character, motives and interests". They have to be won with arms in hand and through the conscious self activity of the oppressed themselves. Dr. Ambedkar's tragic failure to grasp this lesson were rooted in both the limitations of his outlook as well as the force of circumstances.

The democratic struggle in any oppressed nation is inseparably linked to the worldwide revolutionary struggle to destroy the imperialist system because this system itself is the main hurdle to democratisation. This task cannot be accomplished under the guidance of even the most radical bourgeois outlook because it calls for an uprooting of capitalism itself. Only the proletariat, interested in the destruction of capitalism, can lead the struggle for democracy in an oppressed nation. This struggle, which includes the anti-Brahminic struggle as an important component in the Indian context, becomes a new type of democratic revolution, the New Democratic Revolution as elaborated by Mao Tse Tung.

As noted earlier, Dr. Ambedkar had himself recognised the limitations of bourgeois equality.

After the betrayal of Poona Pact, Dr. Ambedkar had taken up the task of organising a working class party, the Independant Labour Party. Addressing a meeting of wrokers he said "You must join a political party which is based upon class interests and class consciousness".(5) During this period (just before the outbreak of the 2nd World War and his joining the Imperial Council)

Dr. Ambedkar was activey involved in organising mill workers struggles. His experiences led him to identify Brahminism and Capitalism as the two enemies the workers have to deal with. This was a lasting contribution to the working class movement in India. Yet the bitter fact remains that the communist party leadership never supported or co-operated with him, except for a very brief period. Refusing to accept the necessity of the anti-Brahminic struggle or its role in welding the proletariat into a class conscious of its historical task the communist party leadership compromised with castism within the workers ranks and society at large in the name of class unity.

Thus a possible unity between the communist movement and the anti-Brahminic democratic movement was shattered. Instead of playing the

role of a leader of the national liberation struggle who unifies all the radical progressive trends into a powerful onslaught against imperialism and local reaction, the communist party betrayed them and pushed them towards compromise with the imperialists and the compradors. While evaluating the drawbacks in Dr. Ambedkar's positions within the government and Constituent Assembly were often more advanced than those of the communist leadership which claimed to be leading revolution but was actually sunk in the marsh of Constitutionalism.

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Towards the end of his life Dr. Ambedkar called upon the Dalits to break away from Hinduism dominated by Brahminism and convert to Buddhism. This conversion was seen as a means for the Dalits to liberate themselves en masse from the ideological grip of Brahminism and acquire a new identity which could unite the various Dalit castes into one community. The experience of nearly four decades reveals that these aims could not be achieved. Among the Dalit-castes only the Mahars of Maharashtra converted en masse as Buddhists. Thus the aim of creating a new

community with a new identity remained unrealised. Among the neo-Budhist Mahars themselves, caste feelings have not been eliminated even though they could assert themselves against upper caste domination. The tiny bourgeois strata and the fairly big petty bourgeois strata which has emerged among the Mahars have stifled the emancipatory, anti-Brahminic thrust of Buddhism. They have made it into a convenient ritualistic dogma to serve their own interests. Evidently, religious conversion is not a solution.

Though Dr. Ambedkar was wrong in considering that religion could play the role of a binding ideological force, his recognition of the need to forge a community with a new identity, starting from among the Dalits, in order to breakdown caste barriers was a correct step. The history of the anti-Brahminic, democratic movements in the Indian sub-continent shows that the projection of such communities religious or secular, has played a decisive role. Examples are the Sikh Khalsa, the Veerasaiva Lingayat community, Phule's Bahujansamaj or E V. Ramaswamy Periyar's Dravida Nadu.

Today also, the annihilation of caste calls

for the projection and development of a new community transcending caste and religious barriers. But in the present stage of historical development, these communities can only be the nationalities within India. While caste oppression, untouchability, denial of any right to land etc are faced by the Dalit castes throughout India, their position in the economy, their relations with other castes and even the specific forms of caste oppression are stamped with the particularities of each nationality. Similarly, the traditions of anti-Brahminic democratic struggles also reveal such particular national characteristics. On the other hand, the very emergence of the national formations in the sub-continent, of national languages and cultures, are closely related to the anti-Brahminic struggles waged by the Shudra and the Dalit masses. The further advance of the nationalities to independence and the Dalit's emancipation through caste annihilation mutually depend on each other. To emancipate themselves the Dalits must participate in the national liberation struggles through playing their role as the main ^{motive} force of national renaissance by unleashing the anti-Brahminic caste annihilation

struggles. The struggle to annihilate caste must be carried out as a continuation of national anti-Brahminic traditions drawing in all progressive sections and as a vital component of the national liberation struggles directed against imperialism, the all-India compradore bureauratic bourgeoisie and feudalilsm.

Today Dr. Ambedkar's stated views on maintaining India as a Unitary state and enforcing a single official language are being utilised by the ruling class and a section of opportunist Dalit politicians to strengthen the grip of 'Indian integrationist' thinking among the Dalit masses. A number of progressive Dalit forces, who are Ambedkerists, are also influenced to some extent by such thinking.

To clarify this issue we must first of all recognise that Dr. Ambedkar's stand in favour of a unitary India had nothing in common with the all-India comprador's 'national Integration'. Dr. Ambedkar was quite clear that their 'Indian nationalism' was nothing other than Brahminic hegemony in disguise. Exposing this he wrote, ".....Indian Nationalism has developed a new doctrine which may be called the Divine Right of

the Majority to rule the Minorities according to the wishes of the Majority (i.e. the Hindu upper castes— C.K.C). Any claim for the sharing of power by the minority is called communalism while the monopolising of the whole power by the Majority is called Nationalilsm".(6) Secondly, Dr. Ambedkar supported the idea of 'linguistic reorganisation of States and recognised its relation to democratisation. He pointed out; " We want linguistic States for two reasons. To make easy the way to democracy and to remove radical and cultural tensions."(7) " A linguistic province produces what democracy needs, namely, social homogeneity....."(8) He also opposed the Nehru government's avoiding the reorganisation of the Northern states like U.P., Bihar etc and pointed out that this was done with the aim of securing the hegemony of the conservative North thoroughly dominated by Brahminism over the progressive South.(9)

Then why did he still stand for the formation of a Unitary Indian state and argue for a single official language to prevent its breaking up? If we trace out Dr. Ambedkar's views on this question right from the time of the Round Table

Conference in the '30s we can see that he saw the existence of a strong Centre as a necessary safeguard to protect the Dalits and other minorities from persecution by the local dominant castes. The question of linguistic reorganisation of the States was being raised then as purely a matter of constitutional rearrangement, even by the Communist party.* In such a situation one can readily accept that Dr. Ambedkar had a genuine concern. But the bloody experience of the past 40 years clearly shows that a powerful centre is no guarantee. It shows that the real guarantee is achieving true 'social homogeneity' by breaking down caste-communal barriers in each nationality through the complementary revolutionary struggles to liberate the nations, end exploitation and annihilate caste.

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The task of identifying, assimilating and implementinig Dr. Ambedkar's contributions in the anti-Brahminic, democratic struggle can be carried out only under the leadership of the proletariat and its ideology, Marxism - Leninism - Mao Tsetung Thought.

Caste is a product of pre-capitalist

exploitative systems. It has continued to exist even while some of the characteristics of the caste system have transformed in accordance with changes in the exploitative system. But it is wrong to think that the caste system is simply a remnant of pre-capitalist exploitative systems such as feudalism. The imperialist blocking of democratic revolution, either through protecting feudalism in the colonial period or through imposed neocolonial transformation, has certainly played a decisive role in retaining many of the obnoxious features of the caste systems in the different nationalities intact. But, even in the absence of imperialist domination, a bourgeois democratic revolution would also not have eliminated caste. Even after its role in the division of labour is ended and all caste barriers to opportunities are destroyed, caste can still remain as a social organisation. This is because the consciousness created by graded inequality and social ordering will be readily assimilated as a powerful weapon by the bourgeoisie itself to consolidate its exploitative order. The history of anti-Brahminic struggles teaches us how the upper layers of the leading

castes themselves became the defenders of the Brahminic caste system, in order to protect their exploitation. This is why the successful annihilation of caste demands proletarian leadership. Being a class which can emancipate itself only through eliminating all oppressive, exploitative relations, the proletariat and its outlook alone can ensure the continuous struggle without let up against caste, caste consciousness and Brahminism which underpin^g them.

In the present situation, the convergence between the class interests and the brahminic upper caste interests of the all-India ruling class is becoming more and more clear. Hindu revivalism is promoted as the ideological prop of the Indian state to secure its imposed national integration. While the aggressive penetration of neocolonialism is snatching away the already miserable livelihood of the toiling masses, the promotion of Hindu revivalism has led to an allround intensification of casteist attacks on Dalits and communal frenzy against religious minorities. National struggles are being suppressed in most brutal manner. The proletariat must step forward to unite all the streams of rebellions and

opposition to the all-India ruling class, its centralised state and its lackeys in the various nationalities, through leading the national liberation struggles of the various national peoples. The ensemble of national liberation struggles (New Democratic revolutions) led by the proletarian party is the only basis on which the anti-Brahminic struggle of the oppressed castes, the democratic struggle of religious minorities and the struggles against the exploitation of imperialist neocolonialism and feudalism waged by workers and peasants can be unified into a powerful torrent which will wipe out the enemies of the peoples and their oppressive ideologies such as Brahminism. The contributions of Dr Ambedkar can be kept alive and developed only by integrating them with this task. At a time when the ruling class is waving its false banners of 'Honouring Dr Ambedkar', the proletariat and its vanguard, the communist party, should resolutely advance its banner of integrating Dr Ambedkar's contributions with the New Democratic revolution and unleash the anti-Brahminic caste annihilation struggle as an important part of the national liberation struggles.

C R C. C P I. (M L.)

October 14

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- 4 Pages 504-505, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches, Vol 2, Govt of Maharashtra, 1982. emphasis in original.
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- 7 Page 145, ibid
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FOOT NOTE FOR P. 13

* After the Congress refused to accept his demand to include gurantees for the Dalits in Swaraj Constitution.

** Dr Ambedkar resigned from Nehru's ministry when his progressive Hindu Reform Bill was rejected by the Cabinet.

— FOOT NOTE FOR PAGE 21

* The revolutionary slogan of national liberation (Visala Andhra Praja Rajyam) linked to armed struggle against feudalism, and the struggle ^{against} Indian state and involving attacks on the caste system was briefly raised in the Telengana Struggle. This struggle was withdrawn by the CPI in 1951, two years before the Indian govt took up the linguistic reorganisation of states.

errata -

The following sentence is missing from Page No.16, Para 1st after 7th line.

Ambedkar's views & activities, this decisive factor has to be properly recognised. And it must also be recognised that -----

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